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A democratic forum study in five countries

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Chapter 3: European Welfare Nationalism: A deliberative forum study in five countries

Christian Albrekt Larsen, Morten Frederiksen and Mathias Herup Nielsen (Aalborg University) in P Taylor-Gooby & B Leruth (eds), *Attitudes, Aspirations and Welfare: Social policy directions in uncertain times*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Introduction

Immigration potentially places stress on support for inclusive welfare policies. Majority reluctance to grant immigrants access to social rights may be explained in terms of self-interest or national identity. We add a further explanation, people's understanding of national interest and provide new evidence for it from our Democratic Forum (DF) methodology. The context is that a number of European countries experience an increased inflow of immigrants. This is both immigration from outside Europe, for example Syrians fleeing from civil war around 2015, and from other European Union (EU) countries, for example Eastern Europeans looking for better living standards and job opportunities. These developments have shaped public debates about immigration and about the role and scope of the welfare state.

One of the early predictions was that increased ethnic diversity would make Europeans less supportive of welfare states arrangements (for example Alesina and Glaeser, 2004; Larsen, 2011). The background for this prediction was the American experience where ethnic diversity, especially the presence of a deprived black minority, has been decisive for public resistance towards poverty relief programs such as the former social assistance program for single mothers (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), Medicaid and food stamps (Gilens, 1996; 2000). A number of studies have tried to verify or falsify this prediction connecting stocks or flows of immigrants to general public attitudes to European welfare states. The results have been inconclusive. At the aggregated national level, it is hard to find any significant relationships (Brady and Finnigan, 2014; Mau and Burkhardt, 2009), while a growing body of literature points to a negative relationship at more disaggregated levels (Eger, 2010; Eger and Breznau, 2017). Our interpretation is that the result at least demonstrates the absence of a general law-like connection between ethnic diversity and public support for state welfare, as implied for example by Alesina and Glaeser (2004). In the European context with a popular welfare state already in place (in contrast to the United States [US] case) and with a multi-party system making it possible to combine anti-migrant, anti-EU- and pro-welfare-attitudes (in contrast to the two party system of the US), ethnic diversity is more likely to lead to what has been labelled welfare chauvinism. The chapter will use the more encompassing term "welfare nationalism".

This “welfare for our own kind” has been a winning political formula in a number of European countries, for example the United Kingdom (UK) case, where the social rights of immigrants were central to the debates leading up to the Brexit referendum in 2016. The “welfare for our kind formula” was pioneered in Denmark and Norway in the late 1980s by the so-called progress parties (Andersen and Bjørklund, 1990) and refined by the Danish People’s Party. With roots in the former Progress Party, the Danish people’s party developed a new anti-migration, pro-welfare and anti-EU platform. According to Schumacher and van Kersbergen (2014, p. 300)

“this party’s electoral success and influence on government policy has motivated diffusion of welfare chauvinism to the Dutch Freedom Party and to a lesser extent to the Sweden Democrats, The Finns and the French National Front.”

Working on party manifesto data, Eger and Valdez (2014) show how ‘welfare for our own kind’ has become a pivotal element among the populist right parties in Europe. As the populist right parties successfully exploit these European political opportunity structures, their position is likely to influence the position of mainstream political parties and actual policies. There are a number of examples of national legislation that limits the social rights of immigrants while maintaining rights for natives (Sainsbury, 2006). National parliaments are free to do so in the case of non-EU immigrants, while the EU treaties (and their interpretation by the EU court) protect some of the social rights of EU immigrants. Whether populist right parties are the cause or the product of public welfare nationalism is virtually impossible to determine; the most plausible answer is that causality goes in both direction.

The chapter contributes to the emerging literature on welfare nationalism by analysing data from Democratic Forums. As discussed in Chapter 1, this is a major contribution that takes us beyond the survey methodology used in most previous studies. Survey data is typically unable to show whether the question most relevant to the respondents’ understanding have been asked, why people reply as they do, and what citizens would agree upon if they were able to discuss the issue with each other. These limitations lead us to ask the following three research questions:

- Do welfare nationalist attitudes emerge in public deliberation on immigration and the future of the welfare state in Europe?
- What types of rationales are employed in justifying welfare nationalism in public deliberation in Europe?
- What policy suggestions and consensus positions emerge from public deliberation on immigration and the future of the welfare state in Europe?

Theories about the micro-level rationales of welfare nationalism

The study of attitudes to the social entitlements of immigrants stands at a crossroads between the many studies of attitudes to immigration and immigrants and the many studies of attitudes to welfare schemes/redistribution. Both strands of literature have been used to theorize the background for public welfare nationalist attitudes, which leave us with large number of macro-, meso- and micro-level theories. One way to provide an overview is to look at the rationales theorized as underpinning welfare nationalist attitudes at the micro-level. We distinguish broadly between self-interest, lack of solidarity with immigrants and sociotropic (common interest) concerns for the nation state.

Following a long tradition both in studies of general attitudes to immigration and general attitudes to welfare schemes, reluctance to grant immigrants social rights could be rooted in self-interest. The main argument is that welfare nationalist attitudes derive from competition (imagined or real) for scarce resources (jobs, benefits, and services) between natives and immigrants (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). In this setup welfare nationalism is believed to be strongest among those who stand to lose the most if immigrants are granted social rights. This is often operationalized as the lower strata of society; those in precarious jobs, unskilled workers or those living on welfare benefits. These groups are believed to face the strongest competition from immigrants in the labour market (that could be attracted by generous social rights) and have the strongest self-interest in not sharing limited resources (if immigrants become unemployed and claim benefits). This would lead lower strata of society to reject granting social rights to immigrants. In contrast, the upper strata are believed to have less to lose as they face weaker labour market competition, are less dependent on welfare benefits, and stand to gain from cheaper labour.

The second main explanation for welfare nationalist attitudes has been the lack of shared identity with immigrants. The argument is that support for social policies is rooted in a feeling of mutual shared identity among the members of a given nation state (e.g. Miller, 1993). The nation state formed the boundaries of the democracy, the political mobilization and the class compromises that fostered the modern welfare state. In a simple sense everyone is a welfare nationalists; no one seems to imagine that the Norwegian people's pension should be paid to a Malaysian woman who has never been in Norway. Welfare states are systems of reciprocity and are constituted by mutual obligations among those who belong to that particular (nation) state. This intersection between national identity, social rights and obligations creates a strong division in perceived entitlement. Thus, immigrants constitute a grey zone between those who are included and excluded from the nation. In this framework, variations in welfare nationalism could reflect:

- How the majority think about their national identity – for example in civic or ethnic terms;
- How distant the identity of immigrants are believed to be from the identity of the national in-group e.g. in religious terms; or
- How deserving immigrants are believed to be on non-identity criteria such as need or work ethic.

The common dominator in this line of reasoning is that it is the presence or absence of solidarity with immigrants that shapes welfare nationalist attitudes.

To these two main lines of theorizing the micro-level rationales of the public, one can add a third framing, which we label sociotropic reasoning. The argument is that welfare nationalism could (also) be rooted in concerns about the functioning of society overall. Within election research, voting rooted in the overall (perceived) need of the national economy rather than one's own pocket book is labelled sociotropic voting (e.g. Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981). This perspective is also found in studies of general attitudes to immigration (see Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014 for an excellent metastudy). The basic argument is that welfare nationalism might not (only) be rooted in calculation of self-interest or absence of recipient-focused solidarity feelings but also in perceptions of immigration as dysfunctional for the overall society. There is an element of self-interest and identity in such sociotropic rationales (what is *best* for *us*) but it makes a difference that the yardstick is societal, collective concerns and not individual concerns. In such a framework, variations in welfare nationalism have mainly been theorized as rooted in the perceived costs or benefits of granting social rights to immigrants for society overall. These costs and benefits can be strictly economic. Several international surveys ask about perceived economic net gain or loss caused by immigration, but might also include costs and benefits for the broader social order within the nation state. For example, some surveys ask about how immigration is likely to influence the crime level. However, as we shall see, sociotropic justifications of welfare nationalism can take a number of other forms, as it is the case when citizens are asked to justify their general opinions about the welfare state (Frederiksen, 2017; Herup Nielsen, forthcoming; Taylor-Gooby and Martin, 2010).

Empirical findings from survey methodology

Previous studies of welfare nationalist attitudes among the public have almost exclusively been based on quantitative survey studies (Gerhards and Lengfeld, 2013; Mewes and Mau, 2012; 2013; Reeskens and van Oorschot 2012; van der Waal *et al.*, 2010; Van Der Waal, De Koster and van Oorschot, 2013). In the European Values Study (2006), Europeans were asked about whose living conditions they were more

concerned about. In all countries, the public were more concerned about the elderly, the sick and handicapped and the unemployed than they were about the living condition of immigrants. Van Oorschot's (2006) conclusion was that it is lack of shared identity that makes immigrants the least "deserving" for support. One of the key findings from the many studies based on the 2008 European Social Survey (ESS) is that the vast majority in most European countries support what can be labelled *conditional access* for immigrants.

The question had the following wording: "*Thinking of people coming to live in [country] from other countries, when do you think they should obtain the same rights to social benefits and services as citizens already living here?*" Very few support giving the same rights "immediately on arrival" but it is also a minority that would "never" give immigrants the same rights. The other predefined answer categories in the ESS were length of stay in the country (at least one year), tax payment (at least one year) and citizenship. Another key finding from these studies is that persons in lower socio-economic strata are indeed more reluctant to give immigrants access to social benefits and services than are persons in higher socio-economic strata. This methodology gives an excellent overview of welfare nationalist attitudes throughout Europe but the ability to understand the answers is limited: regression techniques can be used to sort out the relative strength of various variables but with cross-sectional data this is by no means a bulletproof method. For example, the fact that lower strata in society hold stronger welfare nationalist attitudes may be rooted in self-interest, in more ethnic nation-perceptions, in prejudices against outsiders, and/or in stronger sociotropic concerns.

The classic survey methodology has been supplemented by studies that include survey experiments designed to isolate causal mechanisms. The typical methods have been to use vignettes to vary the characteristics of receivers and afterwards measure welfare attitudes. In general, these studies find that ethnicity cues matter. In Sweden, Hjorth (2015) measured attitudes to the amount of child benefit given to immigrants after varying by "Dutch immigrant" or "Bulgarian immigrant" (and the number of children). He finds that Swedes will give a lower amount to Bulgarian immigrants. In the UK, Ford (2016) measured attitudes to the current levels of housing benefits and disability benefits. In the former, he demonstrated that more British (white) respondents found the level of housing benefits to be too high when exposed to an Asian Muslim rather than a native born or a black Caribbean unemployed male living in London. In the latter experiment, he finds that more respondents find the level of disability benefit for a person injured in a car accident to be too high when the recipient is to Muslim Asian immigrant, a white immigrant and a Muslim Asian native (in this rank order) than when he/she is a white native. This leads to the conclusion that both ethnicity and immigrant-status matters. In the US, Canada and the UK, Harell *et al.* (2016) measured attitudes to five different benefits (in a merged measure) after varying both verbally and non-

verbally by white, black, Hispanic, Asian, South Asian and Aboriginal ethnicity. The main effects are surprisingly modest in the US but somewhat stronger in Canada and the UK. The experimental effect tends to be strongest for subgroups that indicate racial prejudices in the survey. Finally, Kootstra (2016) measured attitudes to financial support from the government after varying not only by ethnicity but also by gender, job, family status, level of need, job search effort, work history and immigration status. She found that by taking the cues of effort, work history and migration status into account, the effect from ethnicity largely disappear. However, she also finds that when given a negative cue, such as little effort to search for work, non-native groups are punished harder than ethnic groups.

The DFs provide a more exploratory design. The material is extremely well-suited for studying how citizens frame and actively justify welfare state nationalism – including the institutions, persons, objects and narratives they refer to while doing so (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006).

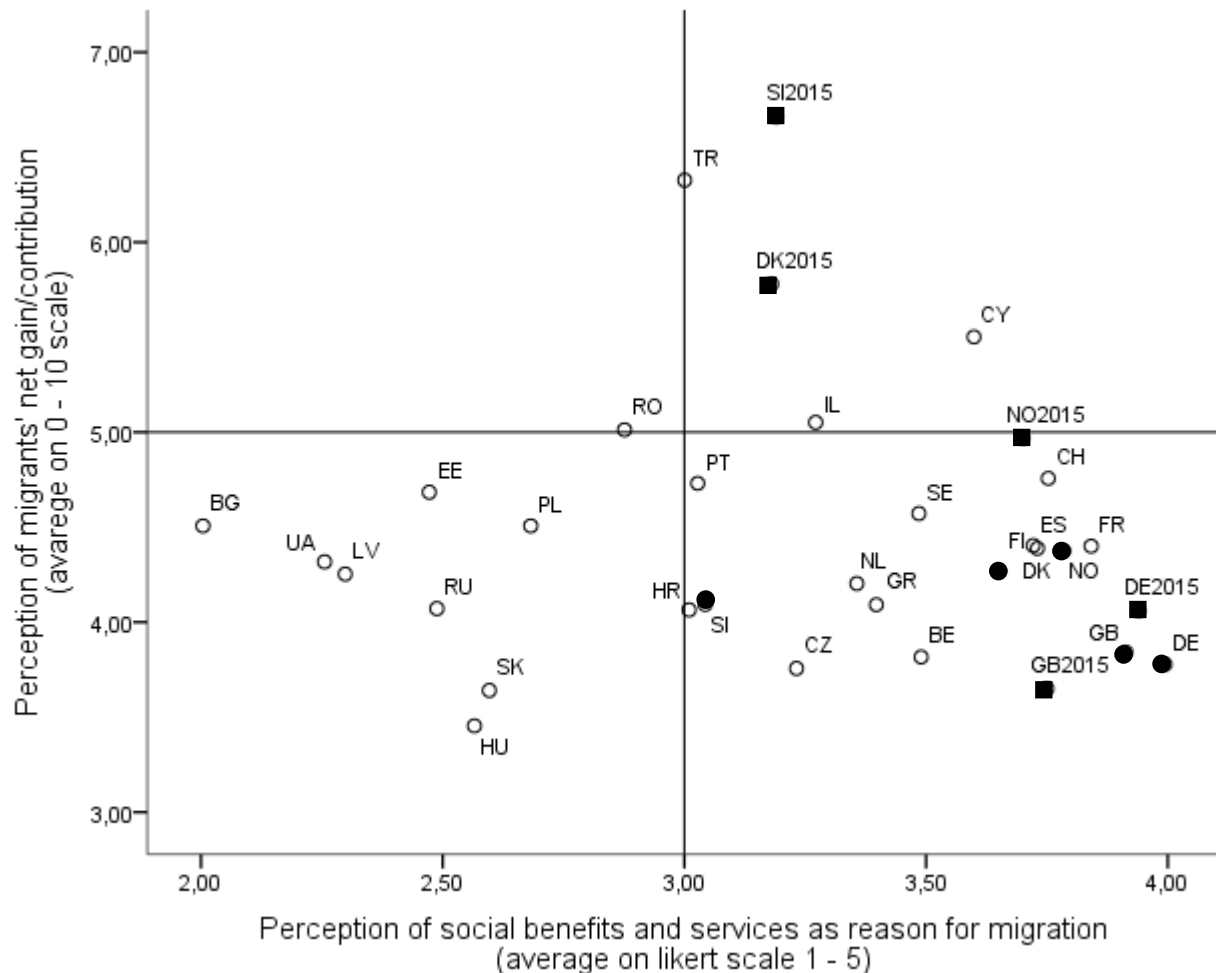
The democratic forums, case selection and initial attitudes

In all five countries included in this study, participants were tasked to select five themes for discussion during the first day, as mentioned in Chapter 1. The immigration issue was chosen in Germany and the UK but not in Denmark, Slovenia and Norway. Before the second day, participants were given written basic information about the size and character of immigration and main conclusions were summarized on the second day, where the immigration issue was forced onto the agenda. As part of the pre- and post-survey the participants were also asked three of the ESS questionnaire items related to welfare nationalism. These were the dependent variable used in many of the previous studies (see above), a Likert scale question about perceptions of whether social benefits attracted immigrants and a 11-point scale about the perception of immigrants' net gain/contribution in relation to social benefits and services.

The ESS (2008) data indicated a clear potential for welfare nationalism in all five countries, as illustrated in Figure 3.1. Average agreement or disagreement with the statement that social services and benefits in each of the 28 ESS countries encourage people from other countries to come and live here is shown on the x-axis (Likert scale from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”). Figure 3.1 indicates large variation. In most of the Eastern European countries, the public tend to disagree in the statement that the social benefits and services of their country should attract immigrants. The most extreme case is Bulgaria. In all Western European countries, respondents tend to agree with the statement. Germany and the UK are the most extreme case. The Norwegians and Danes also tend to agree that their level of social benefits and services encourages immigration. Slovenia is found at the borderline with an average a little

above three. Average public perception of whether immigrants receive more social benefits and services than they pay in taxes is shown on the y-axis. Here the cross-country variation is smaller. The typical response, apart from a few cases (Turkey, Cypress, Israel and Romania) is that immigrants receive more than they contribute. The most extreme case was Hungary. By combining the two axes, Norway, Denmark, Germany and the UK are found in the lower-right quadrant where the public both see their welfare states as a reason for immigration and think of immigrants as net gainers from the welfare state. Slovenia is also located in this quadrant but more on the borderline due to the uncertainty about their welfare state being a reason for inflow of immigrants.

Figure 3.1: The welfare state encourages immigration and immigrants' net gain/contribution to the welfare state. (28 countries from 2008 ESS; 5 countries from 2015, Democratic Forums pre-survey)



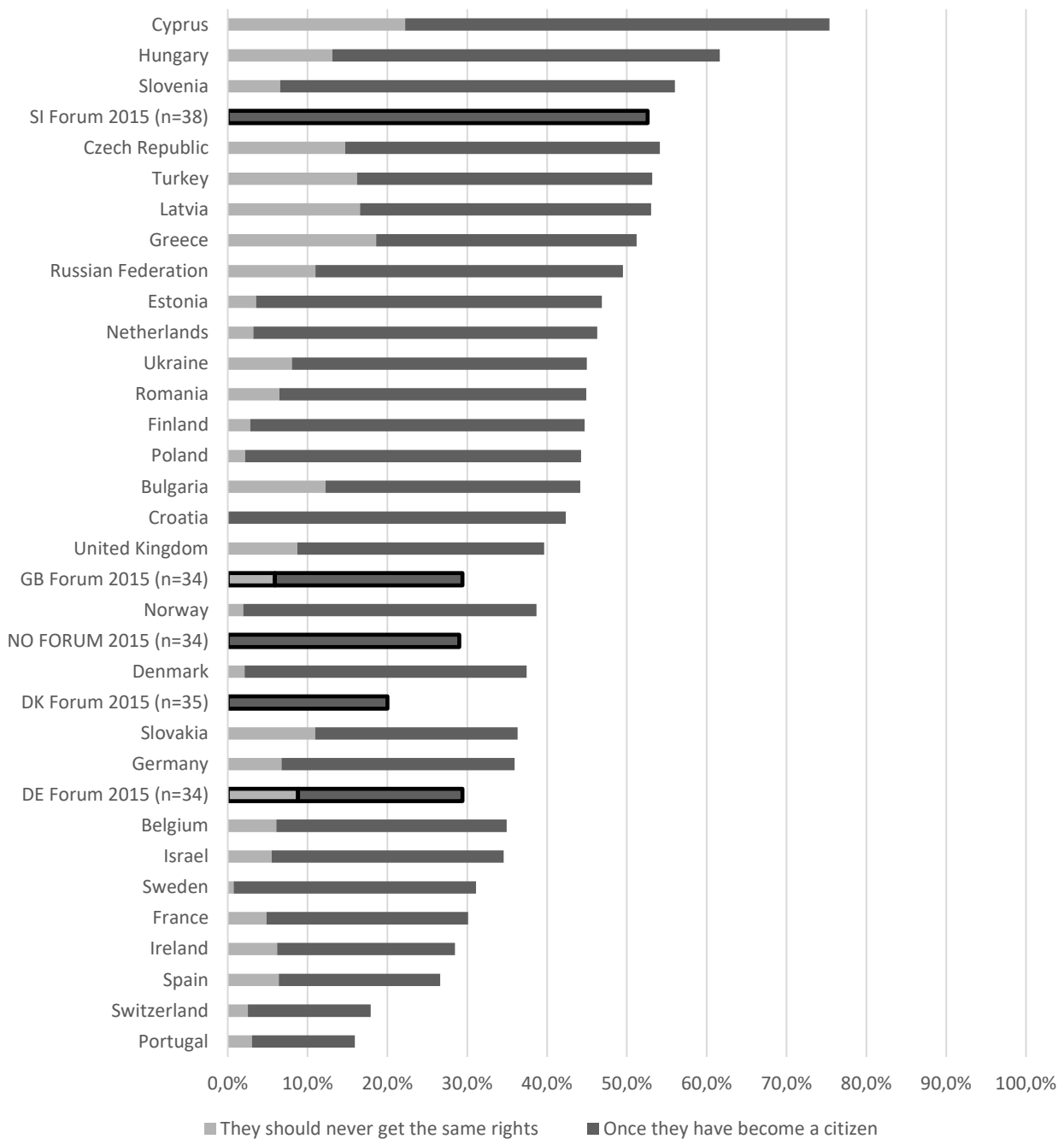
BE Belgium, BG Bulgaria, CH Switzerland, CY Cyprus, CZ Czech Republic, DE Germany, DK Denmark, EE Estonia, ES Spain, FI Finland, FR France, GB United Kingdom, GR Greece, HR Croatia, HU Hungary, IL Israel, LV Latvia, NL Netherlands, NO Norway, PL Poland, PT Portugal, RO Romania, RU Russian Federation, SE Sweden, SI Slovenia, SK Slovakia, TR Turkey, UA Ukraine.

Figure 3.1 also includes the average position of the answers given by the DF participants to the survey just before the forums took place. On these two items the average position of the German and British participants resembles the attitudes of Germans and Britons interviewed in the ESS in 2008. They are positioned in the lower right quadrant. Norwegian participants are on average also located in this quadrant though they are less certain that immigrants have a net gain from social benefits and

services than were Norwegians interviewed in 2008. The Danish and Slovenian participants, however, are on average located in the upper-right quadrant. Thus, at least in the pre-survey, these participants saw their welfare state as an encouragement to immigration but at the same time they thought – on average – that immigrants actually contributed more to the welfare state than they took out.

There is no one-to-one relationship between perception of welfare magnetism and net contributions of immigrants and willingness to give access. Figure 3.2 shows the proportion believing that immigrants should “never” have the same rights or only “once citizenship” is achieved. Measured this way in 2008, Cyprus, Hungary and Slovenia had the highest proportions that would more or less unconditionally restrict social rights to natives. In Slovenia it was about half of the respondents. Measured this way, the share of welfare nationalists in the UK, Germany, Norway and Denmark were lower than the level found in Slovenia. In the ESS in 2008, the share was between 35 to 40 percentage points giving one of the two answers. Figure 3.2 also includes the proportion in the pre-survey among the DF participants in 2015. The general pattern is that the welfare nationalists are slightly under-represented in the DFs if the ESS 2008 results are used as baseline. This is especially the case in Denmark, where none of the participants indicated “never” in the pre-surveys and only seven out of the 35 participants agreed that citizenship should be required. This indicates an absence of ‘hard-core welfare nationalism’ in the DFs, which should be remembered in the interpretation of the data.

Figure 3.2: Attitudes to granting immigrants equal social rights across 28 countries (2008, ESS)



Our qualitative analysis is based on two rounds of coding. In the first, we thematically coded all the material; isolating all statements about immigration. In the second round, we coded all these statements distinguishing between rationales of self-interest,

identity and sociotropic concerns. As a guideline, all statements on increased competition (for example for jobs, hospital beds, welfare benefits) were classified as rationales of self-interest, whereas all statements referring to the deservingness of the immigrant were classified as rationales of identity. For sociotropic rationales we coded a range of statements referring to the assumed societal gains or losses resulting from immigration. It is important to notice that apart from the qualitative differences between countries, important quantitative differences emerged as well. The topic was more salient in the UK and Germany, which resulted in more data from these two countries. It should also be noted that the design implicitly encourage participants to activate sociotropic concerns. The material therefore offers rich insights into the rationales of sociotropic welfare nationalism whereas rationales of self-interest are less likely to appear in this kind of setting.

The rationales of welfare nationalism

In the DFs we conducted, there were significant differences between countries on the topic of immigration and the welfare state.

United Kingdom

The UK data includes a number of statements that point to the importance of self-interest. In terms of competition in the labour market, the reference point is the hard working Polish men who

‘...work really hard, they will do the hours, they will do the jobs but we won’t’ (UK-88) for less pay.

Some respondents also found competition by higher skilled immigrants intensified due to the increased costs of education in the UK. Highly educated immigrants who received free education in their country of origin competed with natives with fewer educational opportunities. In terms of competition for welfare benefits and services, British participants were mainly concerned about immigrants’ access to the universal health care system, the National Health Service (NHS), and education. One basic argument was that if

‘...you allow immigration more and more and more, the Government have to spend more money on benefits for them instead of putting the money into education and social care and other kind of stuff. You need to control the immigration’ (UK-61).

In addition some believed that the free NHS attracted immigrants to the UK. A small number linked the competition issue to housing and even prisons. The underlying logic was that immigrants increased existing strains in these areas.

The UK data also contains a number of statements that point to the importance of deservingness. As elsewhere, a clear distinction emerged between immigrant outsiders and the more deserving native insiders. Homeless ex-soldiers were a reference point: if the UK cannot support this highly deserving group, there is no sense in helping immigrants. The least deserving immigrants were those so-called scroungers attracted by the NHS and other benefits and services, typically unspecified. It was especially degrading if British benefits were sent to persons living outside the UK or used to buy real-estate outside the UK:

‘There are people in this country that claim child benefit, three or four children and they get the benefit and the children are not living in this country, they are living in where the people came from’ (UK-45).

However, the status of “true refugee” could potentially make the “immigrants” more deserving: ‘you have people who are running from torture and killing. Then you have people just coming because of the easy life and [inaudible] the benefits. So the government need to look at the people in crisis’ (UK-89). Thus, in various places the UK participants operated with a distinction between “real refugees” that should be entitled to some rights, “immigrant-scroungers” that should be entitled to no rights at all and “hard-working immigrant workers” who could earn rights through insurance and years of tax payment. European citizenship did little to increase the deservingness; on the contrary the EU-citizens’ right was seen as a particular problem (especially in NHS treatment). What could lower the deservingness of natives – typically in comparison with the “hardworking immigrant worker” – was the status of being a native welfare scrounger (either found among young unemployed or among single mothers). Thus, a British speciality is that the “hardworking immigrant” is sometimes seen as a person that could teach the native scroungers an important lesson about how to behave (for a similar finding in mass media content see Larsen, 2013).

The main sociotropic concerns of British respondents were about fiscal sustainability:

‘Okay, it’s an issue because we know that there is overcrowding, there will be. The strain on the NHS, housing, and education. What the problem is now but tenfold, okay?’ (UK-44).

Immigrants were mostly considered as a strain on the future of the British economy and welfare state leading to discussion of a points-based system modelled on Australia. Another proposed solution was an annual immigration cap. No one argued that immigration might help solve future fiscal problems by providing more tax-payers and there was little recognition of the value of largely working-age immigrants to an ageing population. In contrast a number of respondents discussed the lack of space and

overcrowding caused by immigration. The sociotropic concern about maintaining authentic British culture was also absent. A number of respondents stated sociotropic concerns for the current and future social order:

‘There’s going to be a lot more people coming in, and there’s going to be a lot more people getting annoyed and to stand up so, there’s going to be a lot more riots. There’s going to be a lot more trouble and conflict’ (UK-24).

Concerns were raised about criminals and even terrorists among immigrants, leading to arguments for stricter screening of immigrants before entry. The migrant camps in Calais in France were used as a reference point in some of these discussions. Finally, a number of respondents are worried about the social order in more abstract terms. Thus, concerns were raised about future riots and even internal war.

Germany

The high inflow of Syrians set the context for the discussions of immigration and the welfare state in the German DF. The government was almost unanimously criticized in regards to the lack of planning and funding of the efforts to receive, distribute, and integrate refugees:

‘The state started this whole thing by bringing them in, and now the state must deal with this themselves.’ (DE-18).

Mostly, the influx of refugees is seen to result from a government decision for which government is unwilling to take responsibility. The most prominent topics are the general lack of trust in government management of the issue and an apparent absence of planning. The need for volunteers and the lack of coordination between the organizations involved is also criticized. There were a number of statements within these discussions about the current refugee crisis that point to competition for scarce resources:

‘I’d like to make a comment on that. I have heard from friends that they signed their child up for daycare, but then they received a call from the administrator saying that they can’t take their child, because they have to have enough space for the refugee children they have to take on. I think this is a negative aspect’ (DE-12).

The other two areas mentioned were shortage of housing and of special support in school classes: if the state cannot even provide descent childcare, schooling and housing before the Syrian crisis, the inflow would only makes things worse. There was also a more general discussion about funding, for example whether immigrants' needs were to be funded by higher taxes of lower benefits and services. Besides a single statement about lack of jobs in Germany, there was no discussion about competition for jobs at the labour market.

Discussion of the deservingness of immigrants was briefer in the German DF than in others. This might partly be explained by the focus on the current refugee crisis. Participants discussed the war zones in Syria and former war zones in Kosovo. The moral right these persons have to protection was more or less unquestioned, though there was a discussion about whether the burden should be more equally distributed across European countries. Some participants made the distinction between “economic” and more deserving “war refugees”:

‘Well, and also differentiating between those refugees who are just deciding to come here for economic reasons and those refugees for whom it’s really about life and death; also between those who really want to work hard here, and those who just want to show up and get a handout’ (DE-03).

Finally, there were concerns that the recent inclusion of Bulgaria and Romania could bring more of the less deserving “economic refugees”.

The key topics in Germany were sociotropic concerns for cultural and socio-economic integration. As far as socio-economic integration is concerned, participants reflected and debated on the possibilities of refugees and immigrants becoming productive participants in the labour market – in particular through education. A prominent concern is the educational level of immigrants and the distinction between refugees with good education – for example from Syria – and with little education and whether the latter should be turned away or offered training. More prominent in discussions, however, was the issue of cultural integration. This debate revolved around two interlinked issues: the appropriateness, willingness and possibility of refugees and immigrants adapting to German culture, practices, and values, and the impact on German culture. On the first, there was much discussion on how far immigrants should become Germans in culture, summed up by the moderator as follows:

‘So how are we to address this, how do you get the tradition or the culture across, so that they adjust relatively quickly to life here and can work here?’

Some argued that it is both appropriate and necessary that people retain their cultural roots, while others argued that they must adhere to Germany culture. The strongest consensus was over the need to learn and speak German. Education should be used, it was argued, to bestow a respect for common principles of mutual respect, democracy, the rule of law and hygiene on refugees and immigrants. Another central issue is that refugees and immigrants should become part of communities and society in general – not packed away in ghettos or camps.

Some argued that the German language, main religion and values will change due to the influx of immigrants:

‘We’ll die out, and the Muslims will take over. That’s the way it will be’ (DE-23).

Others saw this position as exaggerated, relying on education for cultural adaptation. Fear and conflict were also common topics discussed throughout the forum. Fear of immigrants and refugees was thought to have increased in Germany due to the increased levels of crime, immigrants’ (perceived) lack of gratitude, their (again, perceived) proneness to Islamic extremism and terrorism, and the lack of public debate on these issues. Some participants argued that programmes to limit the number of immigrants and integrate those already in Germany would lead to greater safety in schools and a reduced risk of drug crimes. There are however, many who reject this view, arguing that the increase in societal conflict levels is created by both residents and immigrants, and exploited by the far right.

Denmark

Danish participants virtually said nothing about direct competition between natives and immigrants. Instead, the group discussed immigration policies and the overall principles of welfare policies. In terms of the welfare state, the two main issues addressed were whether immigrants and refugees should gain access to welfare benefits and services and the impact on work incentives:

‘Immigrants come here voluntarily. They shouldn’t get benefits because they have a reason for being here, presumably in order to work. On the other hand, I think that if you’ve obtained Danish citizenship and you’ve contributed for a certain a period of time then you shouldn’t get kicked out if you suddenly become unemployed after 5 years. Then you’ve been a part of society and should have the same rights as the rest’ (DK-65).

The issue of work incentives was connected with welfare magnetism, which was not framed as a competition issue. Neither did Danish discussions include deservingness, apart from using refugee status to pinpoint a more deserving group. Participants argued that welfare entitlements depend on when immigrants and refugees had proven sufficiently that they were willing to integrate and contribute to society. This discussion connected a set of important issues: integration, work, self-sufficiency, and deservingness to the issue of contribution.

Sociotropic concerns were pivotal. The dominating focus was whether immigration and immigrants' welfare entitlements were good or bad from a societal perspective. Costs and benefits revolved around the framing of immigrants as not only an expenditure but as a potential gain for the Danish economy:

‘If we just look a little selfishly on the refugees...it’s super, super awesome that we have well to do, well-educated people who have been able to raise enough money to travel ... here. They can be a huge resource. I'm more worried about the migrants who come here looking for work, because they're the ones who can't make it work at home’ (DK-62).

What was emphasised was the need for labour and in particular highly qualified labour. Many participants further discussed better selection of qualified and productive immigrants. A distinction was made between “qualified Western” and “unqualified non-Western” immigrants and between “qualified refugees” and “unqualified spouses and parents” arriving through family reunification. The discussion considered costs as an investment in a future social return from increased immigration. These ideas seemed to unite the group of more immigration critical participants. The notion of “integration” was brought up on several occasions and the lack of integration was argued to lead to different kinds of social pathologies:

‘Permanent residence and then willingness to integrate and cultural affinity...Because it's a big problem at the moment that people come here without intending to adopt the Danish ways’ (DK-79).

The integration concept itself was used in a very broad meaning by most participants, but from the way it is used it emerged that integration means contributing to the society through labour market participation and self-sufficiency, which some saw as the key requirement for permanent residency and access to family reunification.

Norway

The discussions in the Norwegian forum resemble those in the Danish forum. As in Denmark there were almost no references to direct competition for scarce resources. There was a single statement that Norwegian young people are unable to get apprenticeships because foreigners enter the job market but other participants called it a “system mistake” and did not continue the discussion. There was one general statement about immigrants taking jobs in the future. An older participant provided a flashback to the 1970s where unemployment caused a conflict between Pakistani workers and Norwegians. The underlying logic was that the current situation is different. The problems of welfare magnetism and the work incentives of immigrants were presented but as in Denmark these issues were discussed in socio-tropic terms; as either a potential future socio-economic problem – ‘many people don’t take jobs because the social benefits are so good that there is no need working’ (NO-30) - or a problem for the integration of immigrants:

‘We do get many Muslims now. Some are Shia and some are Sunni. There have been conflicts in other places and we could risk having conflicts here too’ (NO-31).

The solidarity and deservingness rationales were more prominent in Norway than in Denmark. The status of “refugee” categorised the most deserving. Refugee status was not only linked to current conflicts, for example in Syria, but also to environmental issues, and likely to increase due to climate changes. As for the broad category of “immigrants”, including “refugees”, the dominant argument was that labour market integration and a broad willingness to “integrate” made a person more deserving:

‘I have interviewed immigrant women myself to get them apprenticeships and possibility for a long-term job. Then many of them say “No, I can’t wear trousers because I wear a long dress”. Then I have made adjustments as to how people can do things, but many say no, culturally. I think Norway has to be harsher in those cases. You have to work, and actually say yes to what is offered to you’ (NO-10).

Some suggested more conditionality while others disagreed. The discussion was linked to Roma beggars in the streets of Oslo. Some participants questioned the deservingness of this current “problem” group with reference to lack of reciprocity in the form of tax-

payment and general lack of integration into the Norwegian society. Finally, a number of participants claimed that (other) Norwegians are outright racists. This was more or less unchallenged by the other participants. This diagnosis led to sociotropic concerns for “social cohesion” (see below) but probably also entered the moral rationales. The underlying logic was that some of the current problems experienced by immigrants were not due to lack of effort by immigrants, but to Norwegian racism.

The Norwegian discussions were dominated by sociotropic concerns. The general positive attitudes to both refugees and immigrants were mostly connected to the current and future need for labour in Norway:

‘We will be needing manpower, at least in healthcare with the elder boom coming. We don’t have enough people to care for the old people,’ (NO-12).

Many stated that both refugees and immigrants hold valuable qualification that were needed. Therefore the lack of labour market integration was perceived as something that needs to be fixed through various means, such as reducing discrimination in recruitment procedures, better acceptance of foreign skills and diplomas and compulsory language courses. The minority position questioned whether Norway really would be short on labour in future. This led to a consensus position about a need for a selection of “immigrants” but not “refugees”.

As in Denmark, there was also a sociotropic concern for broader social cohesion. There were no references to the need to protect an “authentic” Norwegian culture. What comes closest was a statement about not bringing foreign flags to the parade of the 17th of May when Norwegians celebrate their constitution. Otherwise the coherence debate was framed around the maintenance of gender equality, violent young immigrants and the problem with extreme right-wing nationalism. As in the Denmark, the somewhat fuzzy concern for “coherence” is linked to the fuzzy concept of “integration”. In Norway a number of specific state policies were suggested; especially compulsory language programs. This led to a discussion about the balance between the responsibility of the state and the individual for “integration”.

Slovenia

The Slovenian DF also contains few statements about direct competition for jobs, benefits and services between natives and immigrants. Syrian refugees were perceived to have no intention to settle, though the numbers of refugees were discussed. In contrast, attracting high qualified immigrants was the main issue, since well-educated

Eastern European migrants tend to depart for Northern Europe (see below). Deservingness did not generate discussion because there is little ‘welfare nationalism’. Some argued that welfare rights should not be granted to “immigrants” when Slovenia was still building a decent welfare state for its own citizens

The most prominent sociotropic topic was the issue of attracting qualified labour while retaining cultural integrity. The issue of attracting qualified labour and much-needed experts was even framed by some of the participants as a question of how to retain refugees and immigrants currently moving through southern Europe and on to central and northern Europe. Slovenia was seen as less attractive to qualified immigrants than for example Germany. More generally, the lack of highly qualified experts and skilled and unskilled labour is seen as a potential economic threat:

‘Since our country is lacking certain profiles of people, for example in health care, and even our people are running to other countries, I guess – OK [...] we could possibly attract these profiles with, ... benefit bonuses, to come from abroad and work here... not Northern countries, but the south and the Middle East.’ (SI-55).

Much of the discussion revolves around creating the right incentives to attract qualified immigrants for example, tax exemptions and various services or benefits.

The issue of cultural integrity emerged as a concern that the entry of immigrants with different cultural values threatened Slovenian society, identity and language:

‘We'll end up losing our own identity, if we allow them to bring their entire culture here and continue to follow it ...’ (SI-58).

The inflow of different cultural values is seen to cause conflict and threaten principle such as tolerance and equality. In particular, Muslims and the practice of wearing veils were mentioned by some as representing a different and incompatible cultural values pattern, a position contested by others. The issue of cultural integrity is primarily framed as an issue of integration or assimilation, emphasising the need both to accept the majority way of life and in particular learning the Slovenian language as part of becoming a citizen:

‘Now if it’s happening, I just see that, that the problem is public use of Slovenian language....’ (SI-76).

Citizenship also played an important role in the discussion of integration, discussing citizenship requirements such as language skills and employability.

Policy proposals and attitude consensus

The content of the discussions in the DFs allows us to (partly) answer the first research question about whether and how welfare nationalist attitudes emerge and the second question about how these attitudes are justified. However, an additional advantage of deliberative forums is the possibility of studying the framing of the issue on which the public would agree on after discussions enlightened by contrasting opinions and basic information about the subject at hand. The pre- and post-survey results can describe forum dynamics and potential consensus positions. As expected, the data indicates a move towards fewer “don’t know” answers as well as middle position answers (five on an 11-point scale or neither agree nor disagree). The participants developed their opinions as the forums progressed. There is, however, little evidence that this dynamic of opinion formation leads to less welfare nationalist attitudes. This is somewhat surprising, as we would expect the process of rational deliberation to temper more extreme attitudes.

In the Slovenian case, the pre- and post-survey comparison indicates that the participants came to hold more welfare nationalist attitudes. 27 of the 37 Slovenian participants answered in the post-survey that equal social rights to immigrants should require citizenship; reflecting a reduction in those answering that equal access should be given after tax payment for a year or more (from 17 participants to 8 participants). No one came to think that entitlements should be given immediately on arrival or independent of work. This harder attitude was formed despite a majority perception (both in the pre- and post-survey) of immigrants being net contributors to the Slovenian welfare state and the discussion about ways of increasing immigration of the higher-skilled. In the voting process at the end of the second day of discussion five consensus positions emerged: “Reducing the brain drain”; “Attracting immigrants for shortage professions”; “Assimilation of immigrants”; “Foreign investments”; and “Internationalisation of education”.

In the British case the pre- and post-survey also indicates more welfare nationalist attitudes. 24 of the 34 British participants answered in the post-survey that equal rights should only be granted after at least a year of tax payment. No-one continued to defend the view that rights should be granted immediately on arrival or independent of work. Those answering “never the same rights” as denizens increased from two to five participants. In the post-survey more British participants also indicated that the welfare

state encouraged immigration (21 participants out of 34), while they became a little more polarised on the issue of net contribution. The consensus positions which emerged at the end of day two were: “introduce a points-based system” as “incomers need to bring something to the system”; “no benefits should be given to immigrants before residing in the country for a period of minimum two years”; “immigrants’ employers should pay for their healthcare for a period of two years”; “an ID card system should be introduced so that immigrants using the National Health Service can be tracked down and pay for the use of such services”; “immigrants committing crimes should be deported”.

In the Danish case there was almost no change between pre- and post-survey on the question about welfare nationalism. Four more participants came to see social benefits and services as an encouragement to immigration and four more came to see immigrants as net receivers. In Denmark seven consensus positions emerged from the voting procedure at the end of day two. These were : “refugees should not sit in camps but should be subject to swift case work”; “everybody should contribute, nobody should receive passive benefits”; “selection of qualified immigration that can contribute to society”; “immigrants should be seen as an equal resource, which should lead to an attitude change among politicians”; “similar rules in all of EU plus benefits adjusted to living costs”; “family reunification only in case of economic self-sufficiency”; and “immigrants should demonstrate willingness to integrate and there should be a wish to learn the language and abide the laws”.

In the German case the participants became a little more polarised on the question about net receiver or contributor but otherwise the pre- and post-surveys indicate no overall change in welfare nationalist attitudes. In Germany three consensus positions emerged from the discussion: “there should be clear guidelines for refugee policy”; “refuges should be integrated via access to education, labour market and housing; and “immigration, including refugees should be lowered in number and a global distribution of refugees should be made”.

Only in the Norwegian case did the pre- and post-survey indicate a change to less welfare nationalist attitudes. In the post-survey 22 of the 32 Norwegian participants indicate that equal rights should be given after minimum a year of tax payment; reflecting six less indicating citizenship as a central criterion. Norwegian participants did not change their attitude that social benefits and services encouraged immigration but more participants came to see immigrants as net contributors to the Norwegian welfare state. In Norway five consensus positions emerged from the voting procedure. These were: “intensified training in language, culture and laws and regulations”; “more use of temporary residence permits and work permits (to get immigrants faster into the labour market”; “long-term job creation for those with permanent residence”; “campaigns aimed at employers to hire immigrants”; and “linguistic and cultural

integration of immigrants through mandatory Norwegian language courses, requirements for work and self-sufficiency for economic immigrants”.

Conclusions

The DFs provide a qualitative insight into the framing of welfare nationalism, especially salient in UK, where it was linked to Brexit discussions, and in Germany, where it was linked to the exceptionally high inflow of Syrian refugees in 2015. As for our first research question (*Do welfare nationalist attitudes emerge in public deliberation on immigration and the future of the welfare state?*), the DFs show that when asked openly to reflect upon the future of the welfare state and immigration, the issue of migrants’ entitlements to social rights emerged as a salient issue in the UK, Germany, Norway and Denmark, while the issue of how to attract high qualified labour dominated in Slovenia. As for the second research question (*What types of rationales are employed in justifying welfare nationalism in public?*), the forums demonstrate that a number of different rationales were employed in the justification of welfare nationalism. As expected, the purely self-interest rationales were rarely used in the DFs. This is not to say that the prominent role of self-interest explanation applied in previous survey studies is wrong. However, the forums demonstrate that self-interest rationales are rarely applied when people are required to justify their views in a DF. There seem to be a norm, at least in the DFs, that welfare nationalism rooted in pure self-interest arguments is unacceptable. The exception was the UK. A possible interpretation is that the acceptance of self-interest rationales is enhanced by what has become a residual welfare state. Scarcity of public benefits and services probably makes such justifications more common and acceptable. This interpretation is supported by the complete absence of these rationales in the more generous Danish and Norwegian welfare states.

The perspective that theorised welfare nationalism as rooted in the absence of shared identity and solidarity with immigrants was highly relevant in all five countries. At a very basic level, the participants in all five countries used and implicitly accepted terms such as “native” and “immigrant”, showing that for them the boundary of the nation states was self-evident. There were no statements about support for the social rights of fellow EU- or world-citizens. This supports the general findings from the vignette studies that “native-status” matters. The idea of an ethnic hierarchy, suggested by some vignette studies, is more questionable. In the deliberative forums the distinction most used was between the deserving “refugees” and other groups of immigrants. Not giving social rights to refugees is hard to justify in an open democratic discussion. The category was especially present in Germany and Norway. It was less clear-cut in the UK as there was a distinction between the deserving “true refugee” and “the scroungers”. In Denmark deservingness discussions were shaped by the distinction between “Western” and “non-Western” immigrants and the willingness to integrate,

which point to sociotropic concerns. In the Slovenian case, the ‘deserving refugee’ was neither salient in the discussions. Furthermore, even in Germany and Norway, where questioning the social rights of the self-evidently deserving refugee seems to be unacceptable, the category of the deserving immigrant might implicitly make it more acceptable to question the rights of the others.

As expected, sociotropic rationales and justifications of welfare nationalism were present in all five forums. The social rights of immigrants were discussed in relation to what was good or bad for British, German, Norwegian, Danish and Slovenian society overall. These rationales and justifications clearly dominated the debate in Germany, Norway, Denmark and Slovenia, while the discussions in the UK were more mixed. The economic sociotropic rationales were highly salient in the UK, Denmark, Norway and Slovenia. In the UK, the main topic was the (perceived) economic strain immigrants put on the British welfare state. In Denmark and Norway, the main theme was how immigrants could be (or be made) an economic net gain for society. Thus, in all three countries, the idea of a better selection of the economic attractive and economic unattractive immigrants was salient. In Slovenia, it was a matter of beginning to attract highly skilled immigrants. The economic sociotropic concerns were less present in Germany. Cultural sociotropic rationales about preserving an authentic national culture were absent in the British discussions and virtually absent in the Danish and Norwegian discussions. These rationales were more prominent in Germany and Slovenia. One interpretation could be the presence of a more ethnic nationalism in the two latter countries and a more civic nationalism in the three former. However, in the UK, Denmark and Norway the discussions did include rationales about the overall social order: a fear of racism among (other) Norwegians, a fear of riots in the UK and a fear of parallel societies in Denmark.

According to the post-surveys, deliberation in the DFs did not lead to a decline in welfare nationalism. Only in Norway did deliberation lead to greater willingness to give immigrants social rights, which was primarily rooted in consensus that immigrants were needed in the labour market. Our findings are an antidote to the idea that welfare nationalism is something simply created by populist right parties which can be counteracted by deliberation among enlightened citizens.

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